



Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

70 Years
"A Partner in Conservation Since 1935"

Phone: (651) 602-7900
FAX: (651) 602-7914

Transmitted Via Email

May 26, 2005

MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 360-5-33

SUBJECT: PER-SAFETY AND HEALTH

Purpose. To provide information on harmful vegetation, provided by the Owatonna Field Office.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2006.

Spring and summer are a very busy time for NRCS. Many construction projects are going on whether its waterways in crop fields or wetland restoration projects in big patches of CRP. While working in the field always be aware of the vegetation that surrounds you. Certain vegetation can be harmful if you come across it. Two types of vegetation in particular to be aware of are poison ivy and wild parsnip.

Poison ivy (shown right) is a harmful vine or shrub in the cashew family. Species related to poison ivy include poison oak and poison sumac. Poison ivy grows plentifully in parts of the United States and southern Canada. Poison ivy usually grows as a vine twining on tree trunks or straggling over the ground. Often the plant forms upright bushes if it has no support to climb upon. In early spring the leaves are red, by late spring they change to shiny green. By fall the leaves turn yellow, red or orange.



Poison ivy carries poisonous oil somewhat like carbolic acid. This oil is extremely irritating to the skin; it may be brushed onto the clothing or skin of people coming in contact with the plants. If you should come in contact with poison ivy it usually takes some time for it to penetrate and do damage. If poisoning develops, the blisters and red itching skin may be treated with dressing of calamine lotion, Epsom salts, or bicarbonate of soda.

Wild parsnip is also a harmful vegetation. It is part of the Umbelliferae (parsnip) family. Rosettes grow close to the ground and bear leaves averaging six inches in height. The plant has a long, thick taproot, which is edible. Flowering plants produce a single, thick stem that has hundreds or yellow umbellate flowers. The lateral flowers often overtop the terminal flowers. Depending on the habitat and growing conditions, individual flowering plants range to over four feet in height. Leaves are alternate, pinnately compound, branched, and have saw-toothed edges. Each leaf has 5-15 ovate to oblong leaflets with variable toothed edges and deep lobes. Wild parsnip is often confused with prairie parsley, a native prairie species from Wisconsin. The flowers and leaves resemble those of wild parsnip, but prairie parsley are typically light-yellow, sparse, found at the end of the stem, oblong and with few teeth.



Wild parsnip species reproduces readily from seed. Seeds are fairly large and many are produced on one plant. The species spends one or more years as a basal rosette, when conditions are favorable, it flowers, produces seed and dies. Look for large, coarse, flower spikes and yellow flowers from the first of June through the middle of July. Optimal growing conditions stimulate an increase in flowering. Wild parsnip slowly invades an area in waves following initial infestation. Once the population builds, it spread rapidly. This species is very aggressive.

Wild parsnip is tolerant of wide range of conditions, including dry, mesic, and wet-mesic prairies; oak openings and calcareous fens. Wild parsnip prefers sunny conditions. If you should come in contact with wild parsnip it can cause phytophotodermatitis (meadow dermatitis) to the skin. If the plant juice comes in contact with skin in the presence of sunlight, a rash and/or blistering can occur, as well as skin discoloration that can last for months.



If you would like more information on the above plants or other harmful vegetation please visit www.plants.usda.gov.

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

DIST: AE